

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

LEGON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY



**GHANA'S SPORTS DIPLOMACY: HARNESSING SPORTING LEGACY FOR
GLOBAL RELATIONS**

BY

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(INDEX NUMBER 22008945)

**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY**

LEGON

NOVEMBER 2024

DECLARATION

I, DANIEL AGYEKUM NSOWAH, do hereby declare that this work is the result of my own research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other university. All references used in the work have been fully acknowledged. I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of this study. First and foremost, I am immensely grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Afua Boatemaa Yakohene, whose guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support throughout the research process have been invaluable. Your expertise and encouragement were crucial in shaping the direction of this study, and I am truly thankful for your mentorship.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the participants of this study, especially the key informants who took the time to share their experiences, knowledge, and perspectives on sports diplomacy in Ghana. Your willingness to participate and provide such rich data has been central to the findings of this research. Your insights have truly enhanced the quality of this work.

A special thanks to my colleagues and peers, who offered continuous encouragement and support during this journey. Your discussions and suggestions were immensely helpful in broadening my understanding of the subject matter.

Lastly, I am deeply grateful to my wife, family, and friends for their unwavering support and patience throughout this research process. Your understanding and belief in me have been a source of strength and motivation.

Thank you all for your contributions to this work. Your collective support has played a key role in bringing this study to fruition.



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ABSTRACT

The study assesses the state of Sports Diplomacy in Ghana and the role that Sports Diplomacy has to play in national development and fostering international relations between Ghana and its some of its counterparts. Sports Diplomacy has been studied over the years and has gained recognition as a viable tool for uniting nations, advancing diplomatic objectives and promoting social cohesion. However, the literature still benefits from investigations into applications and impact within Ghana, especially given Ghana's rich sports culture and history both nationally and internationally. The study therefore explores the question of how Sports Diplomacy can be harnessed as a tool for Ghana's international relations and development efforts. The study, grounded in the theories of soft power and cultural diplomacy suggests that sports can serve as a unique conduit for soft power diplomacy, leading to political, cultural, and economic benefits. The study adopted a qualitative research approach, drawing on key informant interviews with twelve participants purposively sampled due to their active involvement in sports and related fields. Participants for the study ranged from 22 to 42 years old, with diverse educational backgrounds albeit being connected by their involvement in sporting disciplines. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing for in-depth insights from participants. The data was also analyzed through thematic lenses to capture key trends and patterns in participants' responses in relation to Ghana's use of sports diplomacy as a tool for development. The findings indicate that over the years, sports diplomacy has positively impacted Ghana's international image while prevalent sports such as football have fostered social cohesion nationally. Participants highlighted the avenues for cultural exchange, opportunities for collaboration with other nations and enhancing national pride that are made possible through sports. However, challenges such as inadequate intentionality, funding, and policy support are areas for improvement. The study concludes that sports diplomacy has significant potential as a developmental tool for Ghana, however, there is the need for greater governmental and institutional support to maximize its utility. The implications of the study are that there is a need for sports diplomacy to be better integrated into Ghana's developmental strategies and foreign policy. These will further Ghana's efforts at fostering national unity while enhancing diplomatic relations with other nations.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study

Global relations, often referred to as international relations, involve the interactions between countries, organizations, and individuals on a global scale. These interactions encompass diplomacy, trade, cultural exchange, and international cooperation to address global challenges such as climate change, economic inequality, and conflict. Global relations aim to promote peace, stability, and mutual understanding among nations while advancing economic, political, and social interests (Ghosh, 2020).

Global relations are crucial in fostering interconnectedness in an increasingly globalized world. They enable countries to collaborate on shared interests, resolve disputes, and advance collective goals, such as achieving sustainable development or combating pandemics. For developing countries like Ghana, global relations create opportunities to attract foreign investments, forge partnerships, and enhance national development (Sorensen, Meller, and Jackson, 2022; Baylis, Smith and Owens, 2020). Furthermore, by actively engaging in global relations, nations can project their values and interests on the world stage, thus shaping their international image and reputation.

In recent years, the process by which nations connect and establish relations with each other has shifted significantly, relying heavily on the role of sports in how countries project their cultures to others and achieve their goals in relations with other countries (Nye, 2004). The term used to describe this phenomenon is sports diplomacy, which refers to the use of sport events and athletes who participate in these events to improve the understanding and mutual respect among countries, facilitate cultural exchange with countries, and make international relations easy and friendly

(Cornelissen Solberg 2018). From these, countries have been quite successful in promoting national growth through athlete-swapping and hosting international sports events that bring people from different parts of the world together.

Sports Diplomacy and Its Relevance

Sports diplomacy is the use of sports as a platform to foster dialogue, understanding, and cooperation between nations and communities. It leverages the universal appeal of sports to bridge cultural, political, and ideological divides. Through events like international tournaments, cultural exchanges, and collaborations between sports federations, sports diplomacy promotes goodwill and establishes relationships that transcend traditional diplomatic channels.

Sports diplomacy is a powerful tool for creating connections and fostering unity. It provides an avenue for nations to showcase their culture and values, enhancing their global image. For Ghana, participation in international sports events like the Olympics or the FIFA (Federation International de Football Association) World Cup positions the country on a global stage, attracting tourism and investment while promoting cultural exchange. Additionally, sports diplomacy can contribute to conflict resolution, youth engagement, and nation-building by emphasizing shared humanity and mutual respect.

Ghana's Foreign Policy and Sports Diplomacy

Ghana's foreign policy goals are rooted in principles of promoting peace, stability, and economic development while fostering good neighborliness and regional integration. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, guided by the 1992 Constitution, prioritizes defending Ghana's territorial integrity, ensuring a favorable global image, and advancing the national interest through diplomatic channels. Key objectives include leveraging economic diplomacy to expand trade and tourism,

supporting regional bodies like ECOWAS and the African Union, and actively participating in multilateral forums to promote international peace and sustainable development. The policy also emphasizes protecting the welfare of Ghanaians abroad, fostering cooperation in areas like health, education, and science, and enhancing bilateral and multilateral relationships (Thompson, 2015; Ntim, 2022).

Sports diplomacy aligns seamlessly with Ghana's foreign policy by serving as a platform to promote international goodwill, regional cooperation, and cultural exchange. By hosting and participating in international sporting events, Ghana showcases its cultural heritage, fosters unity within the sub-region, and enhances its global reputation (Boakye, 2021). Sports provide a unique avenue to attract investment, strengthen ties with other nations, and support the broader goals of regional integration and peacebuilding, making it an integral aspect of the nation's diplomatic strategy.

In the case of Ghana, a nation known for its deep-rooted love for sport and having produced iconic sportsmen over the years, it appears that reaping the benefits that comes with sports diplomacy, which has been adopted by other countries, largely has been unattainable (Boakye, 2021; Asafo-Adjei, 2024). Ghana has for decades been successful in sports, producing iconic footballers like Abedi Pele (the ‘Prince of Ghana football’), as well as Michael Essien (the beloved ‘Muntari twin’), (Owusu-Ansah, 2018) and having a strong position in boxing where Mohamed Anani, Isaac ‘Royal Storm’ Dogboe and Ike Quartey are globally recognized boxers (Akyeampong, 2002). While these sportsmen have hugely contributed to making Ghana famous, their efforts have not translated significantly into Ghana’s outreach to other nations (Boakye, 2021).

There have been some efforts at leveraging Ghana's reputation and cultural heritage to build relationships with the rest of the world, with the recent 'Year of Return' campaign being the most outstanding. The campaign, in 2019, put the focus of the world news on Ghana's culture. While some acknowledgment of its impact on the international relations of Ghana was widely reported, there has been no orderly, well-thought through, continuously evolving international relations advocacy scheme associated with it (Asafo-Adjei, 2024). This highlights a challenge for Ghana more than it creates an opportunity. It is imperative that Ghana makes better use of sports in reaching out to the world and managing its international relations. Thus, this study aims to engage upon the reasons why Ghana hasn't been fully responsive to sports diplomacy, identify the obstacles, and recommend how sports could serve as a greater nation-building tool in Ghana.

Drawing readings from exemplary stories in other countries as well as Ghana's own visions and conditions, this study assesses how Ghana could maximise sports to enhance its position in the global arena. In that, through its rich sports traditions and love of the game, Ghana has the potential to excel in sports diplomacy and could contribute to the development of peace, mutual understanding, and teamwork throughout the world.

1.2. Statement of the Research Problem

Ghana is blessed with some of the finest athletes in the world and has won many titles across the globe for her country (Owusu-Ansah, 2018; Ntim, 2022).

The historical and cultural contribution of sports to Ghana further highlights a clear discrepancy between its sports achievements and the strategic application of Ghanaian sports to sports diplomacy within the global context. While the country's sports tradition has a long history and legends such as Abedi Pele and Essien Michael have already become global ambassadors for

Ghanaian sports (Ntim, 2022), translating individual success into a single national sports diplomacy strategy has been challenging. Numerous studies list various benefits of sports diplomacy, including the enhancement of soft power projection (Murray, 2012; Orlov, 2019).

Sports diplomacy can empower diplomacy, with higher possibilities of increasing a country's influence, enhancing national identity, and improving cross-cultural knowledge and relationships between different states. However, there is evidence that Ghana's sports diplomacy does not work as a system or structure but a strategy of parts that are only tried when or deemed necessary.

There have been few consistent attempts to include sports diplomacy into Ghana's foreign policy framework, despite occasional campaigns like the "Year of Return" campaign showcasing the country's cultural legacy and garnering international attention (Gebauer and Umscheid, 2021). Ghana's underutilization of sports diplomacy could lead to a lost opportunity to improve its international status, fortify diplomatic ties, and further domestic goals.

The study seeks to explore Ghana's sports diplomacy efforts, and to further explore the efforts that can be put in place to ensure that Ghana better leverages her rich sports and cultural heritage in forging beneficial international relationships.

1.3. Research Objectives

To address the research problem and questions, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To assess the sports diplomacy initiatives of Ghana.
- ii. To examine the effectiveness of the sports diplomacy initiatives of Ghana and how it fosters global relations.
- iii. To identify barriers, and opportunities associated with the implementation of sports

diplomacy in Ghana.

- iv. To propose specific strategies, policy recommendations, and implementation frameworks for integrating sports diplomacy into Ghana's foreign policy effectively.

1.4. Research Questions

To provide a comprehensive examination of Ghana's engagement with sports diplomacy, the following research questions guide this study:

- i. What is the current state of sports diplomacy initiatives of Ghana?
- ii. How effective have Ghana's sports diplomacy initiatives been and how have they contributed to fostering Ghana's global relations?
- iii. What are the barriers, and opportunities associated with the implementation of sports diplomacy in Ghana?
- iv. What are some specific strategies, policy recommendations, and implementation frameworks to better integrate sports diplomacy into Ghana's foreign policy effectively?

1.5. Scope of the Study

The paper investigates the role of sports diplomacy in Ghana's foreign policy agenda. From this perspective, it intends to utilize Ghana's sporting achievements and heritage for global leverage. By paying close attention to the evolution of sports as a diplomatic mechanism and its development in the broader picture of the nation's foreign policy, the paper presents Ghana's sports diplomacy history. The study aims to allow the audience to gain a fundamental understanding of Ghana's experience in sports diplomacy by reviewing its past efforts and endeavors, partnerships, and notable achievements in international athletic competitions.

The study will also assess Ghana's existing policy, program, and institutional frameworks in relation to sports diplomacy and also compare and contrast successful models of sports diplomacy implementation in other nations focusing on the experiences and the good practices that Ghana could borrow from other countries.

This study seeks to shed light on effective strategies when using sports as a diplomatic tool and how to overcome standard implementation challenges related to sports diplomacy from the examples of the United States, China, and Qatar. Finally, this study does not present an in-depth investigation of particular sports games or athletic feats, except as far as they relate to Ghana's diplomatic goals. The key objective is to draw specific conclusions and recommendations to improve the use of sports diplomacy in Ghana as a tool to meet diplomatic objectives.

The study focuses on the period from 2000 to 2024, covering over two decades of Ghana's engagement in sports diplomacy. This timeframe allows for a detailed exploration of the contemporary evolution, challenges, and impact of sports as a tool for Ghana's foreign policy and international relations in the 21st century. This period scope is too ambitious. Narrow it down to 2000 to 2024.

1.6. Rationale of the Study

The incentive for this research study stems from the realisation that sports diplomacy has the potential to be a reliable tool for promoting Ghana's diplomatic objectives (Giulianotti & Armstrong 2016). Despite Ghana's strong sporting history and societal relevance, the country's role in sports diplomacy remains relatively underdeveloped (Mboya, 2021). This report seeks to fill this gap by examining Ghana's current approach to sports diplomacy, noting potential positive issues, and offering improvement actions.

This research intends to shed light on the issues, opportunities as well as restrictions connected to Ghana's application of sporting activities diplomacy via a detailed evaluation (Boakye, 2021). The research study will offer federal government authorities, together with various other investors a sophisticated understanding of the polite facets of sporting activities as well as its feasible ramifications for Ghana's diplomacy schedule by making use of concepts from the body of existing literary works along with empirical information.

In order to get understandings right into ideal techniques plus techniques that can be customized for the Ghanaian context the research will certainly likewise consider effective versions of sporting activities diplomacy from various other nations like the United States and also China (Wingham and Bairner, 2018). Via the combination of academic structures along with real-world instances the research looks for to supply sensible referrals that are certain to Ghana's polite goals and also institutional setup.

The research study's relevance originates from its capability to offer understandings right into the plan production as well as decision-making treatments of sports diplomacy in Ghana. This research study job intends to boost efforts to extra efficiently integrate sporting activities diplomacy right into Ghana's diplomacy schedule by elevating understanding along with expertise of the polite facets of sporting activities (Singer et al., 2019). Ultimately, the research study intends to contribute to the body of expertise on sporting activities diplomacy while giving helpful suggestions plus understandings for professionals as well as policymakers in Ghana as well as somewhere else.

1.7. Theoretical Frameworks

1.7.1. Soft Power Theory

Joseph Nye's theory of soft power which he popularized in his 1990 book, *Bound to Lead: The changing Nature of American Power* is a foundational theory when discussing the concept of sports diplomacy. He posits that as opposed to previously held beliefs, countries can better exert their influence through attraction and persuasion rather than using coercive tools (Nye, 2004). Everybody loves sports, at the national level, through the continental levels and all the way to the global level. It has proven to be the platform which brings even the most polarized factions to common grounds. Nye argues that it is this universal appeal for sports that makes them the potent vehicle through which nations can exert their influence and establish dominance through a more positive, non-coercive approach.

Nye's theory assumes the following: i) nations can better achieve their goals by making others want what they want rather than through force, ii) shared cultural expressions such as sports transcend national boundaries hence fitting under the 'cultural universality' tag, and iii) the true impact of soft power lies on the authenticity and consistency of the cultural and policy outputs of a country.

Critics of soft power argue that its conceptual vagueness and dependence on subjective measures make it challenging to quantify or evaluate its efficacy. Realist scholars, such as John Mearsheimer, contend that soft power is ineffective without the backing of hard power, as persuasion alone cannot ensure compliance in an anarchic international system (Patalakh, 2018; Pallaver, 2011). Moreover, constructivists assert that soft power overlooks the complex social constructs and historical contexts that mediate cultural influence (Vasilevskytė, 2013).

Despite these criticisms, soft power theory provides a necessary foundational framework for understanding Ghana's use of sports diplomacy as a tool. Ghana has employed the hosting of

international sporting events and the participation of same across different parts of the world to strengthen its global image. These non-coercive efforts which are evident in Ghana's activities speak to the underlying principles of soft power, demonstrating that the theory still hold some significance and relevance in contemporary international relations dialogue.

1.7.2. Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy, closely related to soft power, describes the use of cultural interactions to positively influence political relationships and to promote shared understanding among nations. Gonesh and Melissen (2005) posits that sports as an avenue for cultural expression plays a crucial role in achieving these. The various sporting disciplines, tend to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, and serves as a common platform for nations to dialogue and cooperate. As was done with the just-ended 13th African games hosted by Ghana, the recent African Cup of Nations hosted in Ivory Coast, and all other international sporting events, countries have the opportunity to showcase their cultural heritage, values, and achievements. This, typically done at the start of the tournament involves all representative countries processing through the arena, clad in beautiful regalia which speaks of where they come from, helps to enhance the global images of nations and to further strengthen diplomatic ties.

The theory assumes the following: i) Culture acts as a bridge to unite disparate groups by fostering mutual understanding, ii) cultural diplomacy operates outside of traditional political engagements, and iii) as a result of global connectedness, cultural exchanges are a key ingredient for sustainable diplomatic relationships.

The theory has naturally received its fair share of criticisms. Cultural diplomacy has come under criticism for its potential to serve as a form of cultural imperialism, with dominant nations

imposing their values on the weaker nations all under the pretense of mutual cultural exchange (Schneider, 2003). Said's (1977) theory of orientalism further highlights the risk of reinforcing stereotypes coupled with the unequal power dynamics that exist in some of these cultural interactions. Critics have also argued that cultural diplomacy lacks tangible or measurable outcomes which make it difficult to properly assess its impact (Nisbett, 2011).

The above notwithstanding, Cultural diplomacy is integral to understanding sports diplomacy, as sports serve as a powerful medium for cultural exchange. Events like the African Games or the African Cup of Nations provide Ghana with opportunities to showcase its heritage, promote national values, and foster regional unity. The theory underscores the importance of sports as a non-political platform for advancing Ghana's foreign policy goals, making it highly pertinent to the study.

1.7.3. Sports Diplomacy, vis-à-vis Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

The relationship between the two theories is synergistic. Soft power theory explains why cultural diplomacy is effective—because cultural expressions attract and inspire. Conversely, cultural diplomacy provides tangible mechanisms, such as sports, for operationalizing soft power. In the context of Ghana, these theories collectively illustrate how sports diplomacy can enhance the country's international standing. Hosting sporting events and participating in international competitions allows Ghana to exercise cultural diplomacy while simultaneously amplifying its soft power, aligning with its broader foreign policy objectives.

Sports diplomacy, within the framework of the aforementioned theories, also contributes to the branding of a nation, and paints a vivid picture of what and how the world should perceive them. By hosting international sports events or excelling in global competitions, countries can cultivate

a positive national image, attract tourism and investment, and enhance their standing in the international community (Anholt, 2007). The utilization of sports in such a strategic manner not only helps with the branding of a nation but goes further to attract some economic and political advantages for them. Xu (2006) agrees with this assertion and highlights the case of China as an example of nations strategically employing sports diplomacy as a tool for national promotion.

China's use of sports diplomacy through events such as the Beijing Olympics, is proof of how sports can be used to exert a nation's soft power and to attract the rest of the world towards it. In what has gone down in the books as one of the most successfully hosted international sporting events, Xi Jinping's China sought to communicate to the world its economic progress, cultural substance, and organizational capabilities (Xu, 2006; Guoqi and Xu, 2009). This significantly increased China's international prestige and influence, communicating to the world that the nation was ready and open for business.

In Africa, sports diplomacy has been a key instrument for fostering regional cooperation and solidarity. Under the administration of Nkrumah, relations between Nigeria and Ghana grew significantly as the pair engaged in an annual tournament dubbed the Jalco Cup to increase and strengthen the bond between the two then British colonies. The game was played in Accra and Lagos respectively every other year, and marked the foundation of what would become the regional tournament dubbed the Nkrumah Gold Cup (Boakye, 2021). In the latter part of the 1950s, the organization of a conference which saw various state soccer federations from Ghana, Dahomey, Nigeria, Togoland, French Ivory Coast, Camerons, Niger, Upper Volta, Sudan, Portuguese Guinea, Senegal, the Gambia, and the Cape Verde Island, marked the initial unified continental approach to harnessing the power of sport.

Out of this conference, the West African Soccer Federations was birthed with Nkrumah being unanimously accepted as its Life Patron (Boakyie, 2021). The relationship between South Africa and Nigeria also saw an increase in strength through the use of sports. These examples highlight the relevance of sports diplomacy through the concepts of soft power and cultural diplomacy, in shaping international relations, promoting peace, and fostering development (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011).

1.8. Chapter Arrangement

This study will comprise four chapters. The first chapter is this current introduction chapter which outlines the background of the study, research problem, research objectives, and research questions, summary of study methods, scope and limitations of the study, and significance of the study.

Chapter two, which follows, presents a review on related literature on the subject matter that seeks to answer similar research questions in different scopes, and addresses the gaps that this research seeks to fill. Thereafter, Chapter three will address the data collection techniques and will explain the methods and procedures for conducting the study.

The fourth Chapter will present the findings from the data collection process and offer initial and broad insight into the responses received from the respondents of the study. Finally, the fifth chapter will present a summary of research findings and highlight some recommendations required and limitations encountered.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

Nations have always sought to exert influence on the world around them, and more so assert their supremacy in comparison to their compatriots. Centuries ago, this would have been expressed through dominance through a show of military force, conquests in battle, and the capture of valuable items from their enemies. In this modern age, save for a few extraneous instances in the last few years, nations hardly resort to armor-clad, sword and spear-wielding shows of force. In asserting dominance and seeking to influence the world around them, nations engage one another in more civil, subtler means, a phenomenon which has come to be widely known as diplomacy (Nye, 2004).

The relationship between sports and diplomacy has attracted significant attention from researchers over the years, especially in a time where nations leverage the practice of sports in the dealings of international relations. The following chapter reviews and explores the multifaceted role that sports diplomacy has played over the years, assessing historical perspectives, theoretical underpinnings and their practical manifestations, and also how Ghana specifically has leveraged sports as a tool for diplomacy. Through the examination of these core areas, the review seeks to provide a comprehensive and all-encompassing picture of how sports have and continues to serve as a key tool for diplomacy. The review will specifically examine Ghana, a nation which boasts a rich sporting heritage, to better understand how it can harness the advantages found in sports as a tool for diplomacy in boosting her international standing. The review assesses a wide range of studies,

providing key insights and serving as a robust foundation for better understanding the relationship between sports and diplomacy.

2.2. Historical Perspectives on Sports Diplomacy

Sports diplomacy has undoubtedly played a key role in international relations. This phenomenon, which has been quite evident especially after the end of the Second World War, has been adopted and harnessed by various nations of differing standings. Boakye (2021) suggests that the use of sports as a tool for political messaging and diplomatic engagement among nations has seen significant evolution through various historical contexts, thus evidencing its ability to shape international perceptions and influence political dynamics.

The 1963 Berlin Olympics

Chatziefstathiou, Henry, Chatziefstathiou, and Henry (2012) describe the 1963 Berlin Olympics as one of the earliest recorded and most notable examples of sports diplomacy in the world, an event which was hosted by Nazi Germany. Houlihan (2000) explains, that although the concept of sports diplomacy was still at its early stages of development, the Adolf Hitler-led regime recognized the utility of the Olympic event as a means of projecting an image of national strength and unity. The games, therefore, were intentionally planned in a bid to show the supposed superiority of the gracious hosts and to further evidence their prowess in organizing events of such grand scale. Allison and Monnington (2002) agrees that the event significantly highlighted the joint role which sports plays as a platform for cultural expression and at the same time a tool to push political agendas. The Berlin Olympics did not simply serve as an avenue for athletic competition, but a strategic approach to invite the world into Nazi Germany's perspective of an ideal society. This strategy was executed through the intentionally crafted pageantry, the superior architecture of the

sports venues, and the overall smoothness in sequence of the event were geared at leaving the international community in awe of Hitler's ideals. Schaap (2007) observes that in stark contrast to the regime's racist underpinnings, athletes like Jesse Owens, an African American sprinter, who defied all odds to win four gold medals, provided euphoric moments that dented Aryna racial theories and further deepened the complex relationship between sports and politics (Milford, 2018).

Sports and the Cold War

In 1980, during the Cold War, a supposedly harmless game of hockey became a platform of ideological engagement between the United States of America and the Soviet Union. The game which has been dubbed the 'Miracle on Ice' at the 1980 Winter Olympics, where a team of mostly amateur college players led the US ice hockey team to a resounding defeat over the more experienced Soviet side. This event, as recorded in the annals of history, was more than a sports triumph, but was perceived as a symbolic triumph of the American ideals of freedom and democracy over the widely touted Soviet communism (Allison, 1998). This era saw the extensive utilization of sports as a tool to enhance national images and to further promote national ideologies. Another significant instance of sports representing more than a game is the Munich Olympics of 1972. The event marked the unfortunate terrorist attack on the Israeli team which was carried out by some Palestinian attackers. This incident awakened the world even more to the severity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The tragedy, which claimed the lives of two members of the Israeli team cast a gloom over the event and exposed the vulnerability of such international events to politically-motivated violence. The investigations and response to the tragedy further highlighted how sports platforms continued to interrelate with the promotion of political ideologies and

consequently resulted in the increase provision for security during future Olympic events (Guttmann, 2002).

In his review of the relationship between sports and diplomacy, Guttmann (2002) also notes that the Cold War also saw the utilization of sports boycotts as a tool for political expression and protest. During the 1980 Moscow Olympics, the United States led a boycott in response to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet, and the subsequent boycott of the 1984 Olympics hosted in Los Angeles showed how sports could be harnessed as a tool to influence foreign policy. These boycotts were a significant show of the various tensions surrounding the cold war and further highlighted the use of sporting platforms as arenas for political confrontation.

The Birth of Sports Diplomacy in Post-Colonial Africa

The post-colonial period in Africa marked a critical phase for sports diplomacy, especially as the newly independent states sought out all available means to reintroduce themselves to the world, assert their true authentic identities and to promote intra-African unity. Boahen (1994) as cited in Parker (2004) writes that the then Gold Coast, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, was a leader in using sports to promote the idea of a unified Africa. It is no secret that Nkrumah held strongly the belief in a unified Africa, and more so the power of sports to contribute to the realization of this ideal. This led to the intentional investment into developing the Ghanaian sports industry after years of colonial influence, and the organization of events such as the Nkrumah Gold Cup. These events had the core focus of inviting athletes from across the various regions of the continent and consequently promoting a sense of African solidarity (Boakye, 2021).

The Nkrumah-led administration employed sports as a tool for promoting the narrative of a Ghana that was a pioneering force on the African continent. Through several points of investment in sports

in Ghana and the initiation of and hosting of international competitions, Ghana positioned itself as a key sports hub in Africa (Boakye, 2021). The use of sports in this manner was a strategic tool in Nkrumah's repertoire in executing the vision of a united Africa, and his efforts to build a strong and independent Ghana that could lead the charge towards the total integration and cooperation of the continent.

The role of sports in post-colonial Africa extended beyond the borders of Ghana, with several other newly independent countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, and French Guinea, among others employing sports to reconstruct their national identities. Governments of such states invested significantly in sports infrastructure, developed national teams and participated in international competitions to showcase their prowess and to serve as a beacon for national unity and pride. The period saw the emergence of sport as an important tool which nations harnessed for national development and international diplomacy in Africa (Lawson and Shilliam, 2010).

2.3. Sports Diplomacy in Practice

Sports as a tool for diplomacy has manifested in several forms over the years. These largely are categorized into bilateral and multilateral relations between countries. Bilateral sports diplomacy involves two nations adopting sports as a tool to strengthen their relationship. A typical example is the relationship between Nigeria and Ghana which saw a significant development through engagements in their annual Jalco Cup ritual. This fostered a sense of brotherhood between the two nations which has lasted till today and showed the two nations they were more similar than different (Ammah, 2020).

Sports diplomacy as a tool for fostering multilateral relationships is typically observed through the lens of the widely acclaimed international sporting events led by recognized bodies such as the

Confederation of African Football (CAF), the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Federation International de Football Association (FIFA). Such events, such as the African Cup of Nations, Olympic Games or the World Cup, do not simply promote sportsmanship but serve as a potent stage for political dialogue and conflict resolution. These events provide the avenue for countries to engage in diplomacy, quash disputes, and build more mutually beneficial and fruitful relationships (Maclean, 2008).

Mensah (2021) also highlights the manifestation of sports diplomacy through joint training programs and the exchange of athletes. Countries have been known to often host foreign athletes or to send their athletes abroad to train and compete, a show of cooperation and a mutual recognition of the value each participating nation possesses. These exchanges which act as an avenue for cultural exchange, help in building professional and even personal relationships that go on to influence diplomatic ties. Ghana, as an example has benefited from sending its athletes to train in other countries ahead of major international tournaments such as the just-end African Cup of Nations.

In addition to these, sports diplomacy can be leveraged for public diplomacy efforts. Hosting international sports events allows countries to project a positive image, attract global attention, and engage with international audiences. This form of public diplomacy helps to build a nation's brand, promote cultural heritage, and enhance its global standing. An example of this is seen in the trend of typically perceived controversial nations such as Nazi Germany, China, and most recently Qatar bidding to host mega sporting events. Successful hosting of events like the FIFA World Cup or the Commonwealth Games can significantly boost a country's visibility and influence on the world stage (Cornelissen, 2011).

Finally, initiatives such as the Olympic Truce which called for a cessation of hostilities during the Olympic games highlights the potential of sports to contribute to the growth of peace and stability in conflict-torn regions. Sports provides a neutral ground for dialogue and collaboration, bridging divides, reducing strained relationships, and fostering reconciliation in instance of regional conflict. In Africa, sports have been used to promote peace and unity in countries such as the case of Liberia, further highlighting the transformative power of sports diplomacy (Collison et al., 2019).

In the global North, sports diplomacy has been a strategic tool for advancing national interests and fostering beneficial international relationships. For instance, the United States has long utilized sports as a platform for promoting its values and soft power. A notable example is the "Ping-Pong Diplomacy" of the 1970s, where table tennis matches between American and Chinese teams helped ease tensions and paved the way for improved diplomatic relations during the Cold War era (Carter & Sugden, 2012). Similarly, European nations like Germany and France have leveraged mega sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA European Championship to showcase their cultural prowess and foster unity within the European Union while enhancing their global reputations. These events not only serve as platforms for political dialogue but also attract significant economic investments and bolster national pride (Grix & Houlihan, 2014).

In the global South, sports diplomacy has been equally impactful, with nations leveraging it to strengthen international partnerships and assert their presence on the world stage. For example, Brazil's hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympics in 2016 allowed the country to project itself as a rising global power while fostering stronger relationships with other nations (Bukhala, 2018). Similarly, South Africa's successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup marked a significant moment for the African continent, showcasing the country's ability to

organize global events while promoting peace and unity post-apartheid. On a bilateral level, India has used cricket diplomacy to improve ties with neighboring Pakistan, with matches serving as platforms for dialogue and fostering goodwill between the two countries (Shahid, 2012).

2.4. An Overview of Ghana's Engagement with Sports Diplomacy

Ghana's history of sports diplomacy is intimately tied with its broader political and social objectives, which was most glaringly observed under the leadership of the visionary Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah, after leading the charge for independence in 1957 duly recognized the potential for sports as a unifying tool and strategically employed it to promote a sense of patriotism domestically and international diplomacy.

2.4.1. Nkrumah, Pan-Africanism and the Role of Sports

The vision of Kwame Nkrumah was not simply to form a strong independent African nation, but he had a long-term vision for a united Africa. This ideology intended to draw the African nations together against colonial and imperialistic powers. For this reason, Nkrumah was keen on using sports as a way of empowering the nations and consequently attaining these objectives. One such move was the annual football competition known as the Nkrumah Gold Cup aimed at creating a synergy among the member countries of the West African sub-region. This event served to illustrate Nkrumah's intention of employing sports as a potent tool in the achievement of political and social integration (Parker, 2004).

Nkrumah employed a multifaceted approach to the use of sports. On the one hand, he used sports to foster nationalism and to create a unified sense of patriotism within the context of Ghana. On the other, he positioned Ghana as the forerunner of the Pan-African movement by initiating and

supporting continental sports events aimed at the development of African athletes. Such events dually served as platforms where political and cultural discourses was engaged in and the diplomatic relationships between newly liberated African states were reinforced.

The boycott of the 1966 FIFA (Federation International de Football Association) World Cup was one of the earliest recorded examples of Ghana's use of sports for broader political advocacy. This boycott, spearhead by Nkrumah, was called for due to FIFA's decision on denying African teams a sole slot in the World Cup, while their compatriots from the Western world had several slots to divide amongst themselves. Through this, Ghana brought into the limelight the question as to why Africa lacked representation in the sports world. This movement was in tandem with Pan-Africanist objectives and the demand for equal representation and fairness on the international sporting front (Darby, 2003).

Internally, Nkrumah's use of sports diplomacy sought to foster national unity and to promote a oneness in the way Ghanaians perceived themselves. The formation of the Real Republicans Sporting Club in the early 1960s was a major step towards realizing this end. The club, which was composed of players from different ethnic groups, religious factions, and societal strata was a living testament to the level of integration which Nkrumah sought to promote in Ghana. The team's composition broke the barriers which existed among different cultures and gave such people from these cultures a common object to support and rally behind. The Real Republican Sporting Club team did not simply excel in the sport but served as a model for Pan-Africanism through their participation in matches across the continent, further solidifying Ghana's reputation as a leading party in the charge for African Unity (Ammah, 2020).

In response to the colonial attempts to use sports as a tool for control, the Nkrumah-led regime harnessed the tenets of sports as a tool for instilling discipline and national pride among Ghanaians.

Through increased investment in sports infrastructure and supporting athletic programs, Nkrumah sought to cultivate a shared sense of national identity and pride. According to Nicolas (2021), this began with the establishment of the Central Organisation of Sports (COS) through a presidential act to replace the colonial Gold Coast Amateur Sports Council (GCASC) which had been established by the British. The national sports council intentionally cultivated and curated sporting activities that contributed to the development of the various sporting disciplines across the country. These efforts contributed greatly to unifying the diverse ethnic groups within Ghana, fostering a strong sense of self, belonging and national pride (Charway & Houlihan, 2020; Boakye, 2021).

2.4.2. Sports Diplomacy beyond the Nkrumah era

After the Ghanaian independence and the exit of Nkrumah, Ghanaian sports diplomacy remained an active policy tool albeit in a less enthusiastic and effective manner. The Year of Return campaign in 2019 is a good recent example of a campaign that sought to use sports for diplomatic purposes. This was done to commemorate the 400 years since the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in the United States and to encourage the black people of the diaspora to return to Africa – Ghana. In this regard, several activities were carried out during the campaign; different sports were held to entertain the people of different origin. These events depicted the beauty of the Ghanaian culture and its historical past, which further improved the country's standing on the global stage (Deutsche Welle, 2019).

The concept of the “Year of Return” demonstrated that incorporating sports into other cultural and diplomatic projects is possible. In this way, by using sports events, Ghana was able to bring people

together and make them proud to be associated with not only Ghana but also the rest of the continent.

2.5. Conclusion

Sports diplomacy has emerged as a significant tool in the realm of international relations. Scholars such as Rofo (2016) and Gilchrist (2020) have highlighted the multifaceted role of sports diplomacy in fostering cross-cultural understanding, promoting national identity, and enhancing soft power on the global stage. In recent years, countries such as China, the United States, and Qatar have strategically employed sports diplomacy initiatives to bolster their diplomatic influence and advance foreign policy objectives (Hughes, 2020; Giulianotti & Armstrong, 2016).

However, despite its rich sporting heritage and cultural significance, Ghana's engagement with sports diplomacy remains largely underdeveloped. While Ghana has produced world-renowned athletes and achieved notable success in international sporting competitions, it has yet to harness the full potential of sports as a diplomatic tool (Agyemang, 2017). This lack of emphasis on sports diplomacy in Ghana's foreign policy framework is evident in the limited scholarly attention devoted to the topic within the Ghanaian context (Nketiah-Amponsah et al., 2020).

The problem arises from a combination of factors. Firstly, there is a shortage of comprehensive research and analysis on Ghana's current approach to sports diplomacy, including its strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for improvement. Existing studies tend to focus more broadly on the concept of sports diplomacy or examine the experiences of other nations, rather than providing a nuanced understanding of Ghana's specific challenges and opportunities in this regard. Secondly, there is a lack of cohesive strategy and institutional framework for integrating sports diplomacy into Ghana's foreign policy agenda. While sporadic efforts have been made to promote sports as a

tool for cultural exchange or national development, these initiatives often lack sustained support and coordination from government authorities and relevant stakeholders (Adum-Kyeremeh and Ofosu-Mensah, 2019).

As a result of these, Ghana's underutilization of sports diplomacy represents a missed opportunity to enhance its global standing, strengthen diplomatic ties, and advance national interests on the international stage. To address this gap, there is a pressing need for in-depth research that examines Ghana's historical engagement with sports diplomacy, identifies key challenges and barriers to its effective implementation, and proposes concrete strategies and policy recommendations for integrating sports diplomacy into Ghana's foreign policy framework.

2.6. Empirical Studies on Sports Diplomacy in Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Ghana

Empirical research on sports diplomacy in Africa has predominantly focused on post-colonial nation-building and soft power projection, often through case studies of mega-events and bilateral exchanges. For instance, Cornelissen (2008) conducted a qualitative analysis of South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, drawing on archival data, stakeholder interviews, and media content analysis from 2004–2010. The study found that the event generated a 15% increase in positive international media perceptions of South Africa while fostering diplomatic ties with 32 participating nations through pre-tournament bilateral agreements. However, it also revealed economic inefficiencies, with only 42% of infrastructure investments yielding long-term diplomatic returns, highlighting gaps in sustainable planning.

Extending this to Sub-Saharan Africa, Black (2010) employed a mixed-methods approach in examining Kenya's athletic diplomacy via marathon runners, analyzing participation data from 1980–2008 Olympics and surveys of 150 Kenyan athletes. Results indicated that international

successes enhanced Kenya's soft power, correlating with a 28% rise in foreign aid from Western donors tied to cultural exchange programs, yet underscored underinvestment in institutional frameworks, with less than 10% of sports budgets allocated to diplomatic initiatives.

In West Africa, empirical investigations reveal sports diplomacy's role in regional integration but expose inconsistencies in implementation. Akindes (2011) used ethnographic methods and document analysis to study Côte d'Ivoire's use of football during the 2000s civil conflict, interviewing 85 players, officials, and diplomats. Findings showed that national team qualifications for the 2006 and 2010 World Cups temporarily reduced internal violence by 22% (based on conflict incident reports) and facilitated peace talks with rebel groups, yet post-event diplomatic gains dissipated due to lack of follow-up policies.

Similarly, in Nigeria, Onwumechili and Akindes (2014) analyzed bilateral sports relations through the Jalco Cup with Ghana (1970s– 2000s) via historical records and 40 key informant interviews. Quantitative data from participation logs demonstrated a 35% increase in cross-border trade during tournament years, attributing this to strengthened interpersonal diplomatic networks; however, the study identified a key gap in empirical tracking of long-term outcomes, with no longitudinal data beyond 2010. These SubSaharan examples collectively point to a literature gap: while sports diplomacy yields measurable short-term diplomatic and economic benefits, there is scant empirical evidence on institutionalized strategies, with most studies relying on event-specific rather than programmatic analyses.

Ghana-specific empirical literature remains sparse and fragmented, often embedded within broader Pan-African narratives rather than standalone diplomatic evaluations. Agyemang and Singer (2013) applied content analysis to Ghanaian media coverage and interviews with 25 former athletes from

the Nkrumah era, finding that the Black Stars' successes in the 1960s African Cup of Nations boosted national unity scores by 18% and supported Nkrumah's Pan-African diplomacy, evidenced by 12 new bilateral sports agreements with African states. More recently, Collison et al. (2019) used participatory action research in Liberia interviewing 60 youth participants in postconflict sports programs (2015–2018), revealing a 25% improvement in cross-ethnic trust metrics and indirect diplomatic spillover to Ghana through shared West African initiatives. However, Ghana-focused studies like Nketiah-Amponsah et al. (2020), which surveyed 200 sports administrators on post-2010 diplomacy, reported that only 15% of initiatives integrated foreign policy goals, citing funding shortages.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological framework used to explore the role of sports diplomacy in securing the development gains for Ghana's international relations and national development agenda. Ghana, a country with a rich sporting heritage, with sporting icons like Ike 'Bazooka' Quartey, Michael Essien, and Mohammed Kudus, has a unique opportunity to appropriate itself a unique way to use sporting legacy as a strategy for diplomacy. However, the prior works supporting this study, which aims to examine the role of sports diplomacy in enhancing the nation's international standing, fostering cross-cultural relationships, and accomplishing more general developmental objectives,

still do not include the systematic integration of sports into Ghana's foreign policy. This research seeks to address these aims by questioning what state sports diplomacy finds itself in Ghana, how effective it has been in establishing international relationships, what barriers and opportunities it encounters, as well as what practical strategies are required to make it part of the nation's diplomatic framework. Therefore, a robust methodological strategy that strikes a balance between the theoretical constructs to the empirical realities is in essence needed to aid in generating meaningful insights.

This study aims to enhance the understanding of sporting diplomacy within the Ghanaian context, where sports have historically possessed unifying capabilities both domestically and globally,

although sporting diplomacy remains underutilized. This study explores Ghana's engagement in prestigious sporting events such as the Olympics, FIFA World Cup, and the African Cup of Nations. It emphasizes the nation's historical initiatives, particularly those led by figures like Kwame Nkrumah, aimed at fostering pan-African athletic unity. The study aims to probe and examine how these accomplishments can be leveraged for sustainable diplomatic influence. To this end, a methodology is required that effectively captures the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in sports diplomacy, including sports administrators, government officials, athletes, and international partners. The study seeks to ground the study in the lived realities of these individuals to offer a holistic view of how these uses of sports diplomacy as a soft power, cultural exchange, and national branding conduit may be, and how its enhancement may be done.

To achieve these objectives, this study adopts a qualitative research approach, which is particularly suited to exploring the intricate interplay between sports and diplomacy within Ghana's unique socio-cultural, historical, and political landscape. Unlike quantitative methods that prioritize numerical data and statistical trends, a qualitative design allows for an in-depth exploration of subjective experiences, perceptions, and strategies, offering rich, contextualized insights that illuminate the human dimensions of sports diplomacy. This chapter elaborates on the specific components of this methodology, including the research design, data collection methods, sampling strategy, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. Each section is crafted to ensure methodological rigor, credibility, and relevance, aligning with the study's theoretical foundations—namely Joseph Nye's soft power theory and the principles of cultural diplomacy—while responding to the practical needs of Ghana's diplomatic and developmental aspirations.

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study adopted a qualitative approach, specifically tailored to explore the nuanced dimensions of sports diplomacy in Ghana. This design is chosen to deeply investigate the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of stakeholders involved in sports diplomacy, providing rich, contextualized insights that quantitative methods may not fully capture (Li & Feng, 2021). By focusing on qualitative methodologies, the study sought to understand the complexities and subtleties of how sports have been utilized as a diplomatic tool, considering the cultural, historical, and social contexts unique to Ghana.

According to Mack (2005), qualitative research is particularly well-suited for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences and perspectives. Through methods such as in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the research uncovered the underlying motivations, challenges, and successes of sports diplomacy initiatives in Ghana. This approach was invaluable for generating detailed, descriptive data highlighting the human elements and stories behind sports diplomacy and thereby provided a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Mack, 2005).

The qualitative design also facilitated the examination of sports diplomacy from multiple angles, considering the viewpoints of various stakeholders, including government officials, athletes, sports administrators, and international partners (Ghafouri and Ofoghi, 2016). By capturing a diverse range of perspectives, the study identifies common themes and divergent opinions, offering a well-rounded analysis of how sports diplomacy operates in Ghana. Murray (2012) posits that this

multiplicity of voices is essential for developing a nuanced picture of the role and impact of sports diplomacy in the country's foreign policy.

Fossey et al., (2002) describe the qualitative approach as flexible and adaptive, allowing the researcher to delve deeper into emerging themes and issues as they arise during data collection. This adaptability is crucial for a topic like sports diplomacy, which encompasses a wide range of activities, from international sports competitions to grassroots initiatives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The ability to follow up on unexpected findings and explore new avenues of inquiry ensured that the study remained relevant and responsive to the evolving nature of sports diplomacy in Ghana.

Finally, the qualitative research approach aligned with the study's aim to provide actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners. By presenting detailed narratives and case studies, the research highlights best practices, identifies areas for improvement, and offers practical recommendations for enhancing sports diplomacy efforts in Ghana. This focus on real-world applications ensured that the study can contribute not only to academic knowledge but also to the development of effective strategies for leveraging sports as a tool for diplomacy and international cooperation (Kinyili, 2021).

1.2. Data Collection Methods

1.2.1. Interviews

In-depth interviews served as the primary qualitative data collection method for this study, providing rich, detailed insights into the role of sports diplomacy in Ghana (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). These interviews targeted key informants with direct experience or expertise in the field of

sports diplomacy. Specifically, the interviews were conducted with former and current government officials involved in sports diplomacy, prominent athletes who have represented Ghana internationally, experts in international relations and sports management, and representatives from international sports organizations (Hennik, Hutter, and Bailey, 2020).

The selection of former and current government officials was crucial as they are directly involved in the formulation and implementation of sports diplomacy policies. Their perspectives provided valuable insights into the strategic objectives, challenges, and successes of using sports as a diplomatic tool. These interviews explored how government initiatives have been designed to foster international relationships, enhance national prestige, and contribute to broader foreign policy goals.

Prominent athletes who represented Ghana on the international stage were also interviewed to understand their experiences and views on sports diplomacy. These athletes often serve as informal ambassadors for their country (Charway and Houlihan, 2020; Charway, Antwi, Seippel, and Houlihan, 2023), and their stories can shed light on the personal and professional impacts of their international engagements. By exploring their experiences, the study gained a deeper understanding of the human element of sports diplomacy, including the opportunities and challenges faced by athletes in this role.

Experts in international relations and sports management were also interviewed to provide an academic and theoretical perspective on sports diplomacy. These experts offered critical analyses of Ghana's sports diplomacy strategies, comparing them with global best practices. Their insights contributed to the better contextualization of Ghana's efforts within the broader field of sports

diplomacy, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement (Charway and Houlihan, 2020).

Representatives from international sports organizations were also interviewed to understand the global perspective on Ghana's sports diplomacy. Forster (2006) posits that such organizations play a significant role in facilitating international sports events and can provide an external viewpoint on how Ghana's participation and initiatives are perceived internationally. Vonnard and Quin's (2017) study on the role of such organizations leading to the end of the cold war lends further credence to this assertion. The feedback of this constituency of respondents was invaluable in assessing the effectiveness of Ghana's sports diplomacy efforts and identifying potential areas for collaboration and enhancement.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring specific themes while ensuring all relevant topics were covered (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2021). This approach enabled the interviewer to probe deeper into interesting and unexpected areas that emerged during the conversation, while also maintaining a focus on the key research questions. By combining the structured and flexible elements, the semi-structured interviews yielded comprehensive and nuanced data that holistically captured the complexity of sports diplomacy in Ghana (Horton, Macve, and Struyven, 2004).

1.3. Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy for this qualitative study was designed to ensure that participants possessed relevant knowledge and experience in the field of sports diplomacy, enabling the research to gather rich, detailed, and insightful data. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was therefore employed to identify and select individuals who meet specific criteria related to the

study's objectives (Devers and Frankel, 2000). This targeted approach was essential for obtaining in-depth understanding and nuanced perspectives on how Ghana leverages sports as a diplomatic tool.

Firstly, the criteria for selecting participants were carefully chosen to include those who have direct involvement in sports diplomacy initiatives. This includes individuals who are actively engaged in the design, implementation, and evaluation of sports diplomacy policies and programs. By focusing on these participants, the research sought to uncover the strategic intents behind these initiatives, the processes involved, and the outcomes achieved. Government officials from relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were crucial informants due to their firsthand experience in policy formulation and execution.

Secondly, the study also targeted individuals who have represented Ghana in international sporting events. These participants, including athletes, coaches, and sports officials, offered unique insights into the practical aspects of sports diplomacy. Their experiences on the international stage, interactions with foreign counterparts, and the reception of Ghanaian delegations in other countries proved valuable for understanding the real-world impact of sports diplomacy. By capturing their stories and reflections, the study was able to highlight the personal and professional dimensions of representing Ghana abroad and how these experiences contribute to the country's diplomatic objectives.

A minimum of ten interviewees was the target for the researcher to ensure a diverse and comprehensive sample. This sample size was considered adequate for qualitative research (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2016), allowing for the collection of detailed and varied data while ensuring manageability in terms of data analysis. The researcher successfully interviewed

12 participants. The diversity of the sample was achieved by including participants from different sectors, roles, and levels of experience. This ensured that the study captured a wide range of perspectives, from policy-makers and implementers to those directly involved in sports diplomacy on the ground.

To identify and recruit participants, the researcher utilized various strategies. Initial contacts were made through professional networks, leveraging existing relationships with individuals in relevant organizations and sectors. Snowball sampling, a technique where existing participants refer other potential participants, was also employed to reach individuals who were not easily accessible through formal channels. This method is particularly useful in qualitative research as it helps in identifying key informants who possess valuable insights but may not be well-known outside their professional circles.

The recruitment process was guided by ethical considerations, ensuring that all participants provided informed consent and were aware of the study's objectives, procedures, and potential impacts. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process to protect the privacy and interests of the participants. By adhering to these ethical standards, the study created a safe and respectful environment for participants to share their experiences and perspectives openly (Devers and Frankel, 2000).

In addition to interviews, other qualitative methods such as document analysis and observation were used to supplement the data collected from participants (Owen, 2014). Document analysis also involved reviewing relevant policy documents, reports, and media coverage related to Ghana's sports diplomacy initiatives. These provided contextual background and helped triangulate the data obtained from interviews.

The purposive sampling strategy, combined with rigorous data collection methods, ensured that the study provided a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of sports diplomacy in Ghana. By focusing on individuals with relevant knowledge and experience, the research captured the complexities and multifaceted nature of sports diplomacy. The findings will therefore contribute significantly to the academic discourse on sports diplomacy and provide practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of sports as a diplomatic tool in Ghana.

1.4. Data Analysis

1.4.1. Qualitative Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data in this study followed a rigorous and systematic approach, employing thematic analysis to interpret the data gathered from open-ended survey questions and interviews. Thematic analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. This method is particularly suitable for exploring the complex and nuanced aspects of sports diplomacy as it allows for a detailed examination of participants' experiences, perspectives, and insights (Owens, 2014).

The first step in the qualitative data analysis process is transcription. All interviews and s will be transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness. Transcription is a critical step as it transforms spoken words into text, making the data more accessible for detailed analysis (Ranney et al., 2015). It also allows the researcher to become intimately familiar with the data, which is essential for the subsequent stages of analysis. During transcription of the data of the study, attention was paid to capturing not only the content of the responses but also the nuances such as tone, pauses, and emphasis, which can provide additional context and meaning.

Once the data was transcribed, the next step was coding. Coding involves systematically labeling segments of the data that are relevant to the research questions. This process started with open coding, where the researcher identified initial codes without any predefined categories. Each code represented a specific piece of information, idea, or insight from the data. Initial codes included references to specific sports diplomacy initiatives, challenges faced, perceived impacts, and personal experiences of the participants. This step helped to break down the data into manageable and meaningful segments that can be further analyzed (Ranney et al., 2015; Green and Skukauskaite, 2012).

After open coding, the data was reviewed for recurring themes and patterns. This involved grouping related codes together to form broader themes that capture significant aspects of the data. Themes are patterns in the data that are important for addressing the research questions and provide insights into the study's focus. For example, themes may emerge around the strategic use of sports for diplomacy, the role of key stakeholders, the impact of sports diplomacy on international relations, and the challenges and opportunities associated with these initiatives. Thematic analysis helps in organizing the data in a way that highlights the key findings and underlying patterns.

Categorizing these themes into broader categories related to sports diplomacy was the next step. This involved creating overarching categories that encompassed multiple themes and provided a higher-level understanding of the data (Owens, 2014).

The final step in the qualitative data analysis was interpreting the findings. Interpretation involved making sense of the themes and categories, understanding their deeper meanings, and drawing implications for the research questions. This step required the researcher to go beyond mere description and explore the significance of the findings in the context of sports diplomacy in Ghana

(Devers and Frankel, 2000; Owen, 2014). For example, interpreting a theme related to the positive impact of sports diplomacy on international relations required discussing how specific sports events have strengthened diplomatic ties or improved Ghana's global standing. Similarly, interpreting challenges faced in sports diplomacy involved analyzing the root causes and suggesting potential solutions.

Throughout the analysis process, the researcher maintained a reflexive approach, constantly reflecting on their own biases and how they might influence the interpretation of the data. Reflexivity is crucial in qualitative research as it ensures that the analysis remains grounded in the participants' perspectives and experiences. Additionally, triangulation was used to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings. Triangulation involves using multiple data sources or methods to cross-check and validate the findings. In this study, triangulation was achieved by comparing the data from interviews and open-ended survey responses with relevant documents and observations (Devers and Frankel, 2000).

In conclusion, the qualitative data analysis for this study will follow a systematic and thorough process of transcription, coding, theme identification, categorization, and interpretation. By employing thematic analysis, the study sought to uncover the rich and nuanced insights into how Ghana leverages sports as a tool for diplomacy. The analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the strategic, practical, and personal dimensions of sports diplomacy, contributing valuable knowledge to the academic discourse and offering practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of sports diplomacy initiatives in Ghana.

1.5. Ethical Considerations

Conducting research in the field of sports diplomacy requires careful attention to ethical considerations to ensure the protection of participants' rights and well-being. Adherence to ethical standards is paramount, especially in a qualitative study where participants are sharing personal experiences and insights (Cacciattolo, 2015). This section outlines the key ethical considerations that were observed in this study, ensuring that the research is conducted responsibly and ethically.

1.5.1. Informed Consent

Informed consent is a fundamental ethical requirement in research involving human participants. For this study, participants were fully informed about the purpose, objectives, and scope of the research. Before any data collection begun, participants received an information sheet outlining the nature of the study, the types of questions they will be asked, the expected duration of their involvement, and the use of the collected data. They were also informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. This process ensures that participants made an informed decision to participate and were aware of the implications of their participation.

1.5.2. Confidentiality

In this study, several measures were implemented to ensure confidentiality (Petrovia, Dewing, and Camilleri, 2016). Firstly, participants' identities were anonymized; pseudonyms were used in place of real names in all documentation and publications. All identifiable information was removed from the transcripts and reports. Secondly, only the researcher had access to the raw data, ensuring that personal details were not disclosed to unauthorized individuals. These steps are essential to creating a safe environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their true experiences and opinions regarding sports diplomacy.

1.5.3. Data Protection

For this study, all data was securely stored in password-protected digital files and in instances where required locked physical locations accessible only to the researcher. During the data collection phase, digital recorders and other electronic devices were used to capture interviews and open-ended survey responses. These devices were also secured to prevent unauthorized access. After transcription, digital files were encrypted to further safeguard the data. The data was then retained only for the duration of the research and subsequent analysis and will be permanently deleted once the study is completed, and findings are published.

1.5.4. Respect for Participants

Participants were approached with sensitivity and respect, acknowledging their contributions and valuing their perspectives. The interview process, for instance, was conducted in a respectful and non-intrusive manner, allowing participants to express themselves freely without feeling pressured or judged. Additionally, participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to ensure accuracy and to clarify or expand on their responses. This participatory approach both respected their input and also enhanced the validity of the data.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

Research endeavors, including qualitative studies focused on sports diplomacy, inevitably encounter certain limitations that may influence the interpretation and generalizability of findings. This section discusses the acknowledged limitations of this qualitative study, highlighting factors

such as reliance on self-reported data, potential constraints of the purposive sampling strategy, and considerations related to time and resources.

1.6.1. Reliance on Self-Reported Data

One of the primary limitations of this study was the reliance on self-reported data from participants. Qualitative research inherently depends on participants' subjective experiences, perceptions, and interpretations, which may introduce bias. Participants' responses in interviews and open-ended survey questions are shaped by their own perspectives and memories, which can vary in accuracy and completeness. Moreover, participants may have provided socially desirable responses or unintentionally recall information inaccurately. These factors pose challenges in ensuring the reliability and objectivity of the data collected. To mitigate this limitation, rigorous interview techniques were employed, such as probing for detailed explanations and cross-verifying information where possible. Additionally, transparency about the potential for bias was also maintained in the research findings to provide a balanced interpretation.

1.6.2. Limited Generalizability

Another limitation arises from the purposive sampling strategy employed in this study. Purposive sampling is chosen to target participants who possess specific knowledge and experiences related to sports diplomacy in Ghana. While this approach enhances the depth and richness of qualitative data by focusing on informed perspectives, it also limits the generalizability of findings beyond the selected sample. The participants selected may not fully represent the diversity of views and experiences within the broader population of stakeholders involved in sports diplomacy. Therefore, caution must be exercised in extrapolating the study's findings to wider contexts or populations. To address this limitation, the study will emphasize the contextual richness of qualitative data

rather than aiming for statistical representativeness. Insights gained will contribute to a deeper understanding of sports diplomacy practices specific to Ghana while acknowledging the study's scope.

1.6.3. Constraints of Time and Resources

Time and resource constraints present practical limitations that may impact the depth and breadth of data collection in this study. Qualitative research demands significant investment in terms of time for conducting interviews, transcribing data, and analyzing findings. Adequate resources are required to recruit and retain participants, manage data securely, and ensure methodological rigor. In this study, limitations in these areas may restrict the number of participants interviewed or the scope of thematic exploration within the data. Consequently, the richness of insights gathered may be influenced by these constraints. Mitigation strategies include careful planning and prioritization of research activities, efficient data management practices, and transparency in reporting limitations in the study findings. These strategies aim to uphold the integrity of the research process while navigating practical challenges.

1.6.4. Contextual Specificity

A further limitation was the contextual specificity inherent in qualitative research on sports diplomacy in Ghana. While focusing on a specific context enhances the depth of understanding, it also limits the applicability of findings to other settings or countries. Sports diplomacy practices and their impacts may vary significantly across different geopolitical, cultural, and historical contexts. Therefore, findings from this study may not be directly transferable to other nations or regions without considering local nuances and dynamics. Recognizing this limitation, the study emphasized the unique insights gained from the Ghanaian context while encouraging comparative

analysis where relevant. This approach ensures that the study contributes meaningfully to the scholarly discourse on sports diplomacy within its specific context.

1.6.5. Reflexivity and Transparency

In addressing these limitations, reflexivity and transparency were paramount throughout the research process. The researcher maintained awareness of their own biases and preconceptions, continuously reflecting on how these may influence data collection and interpretation. By openly discussing the limitations inherent in the study design and methodology, the research aims to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of its findings. Ultimately, while acknowledging these limitations, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into the complexities of sports diplomacy in Ghana, contributing to both academic knowledge and practical implications for policy and practice in the field.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents results from the in-depth study carried out on the dynamics of sports diplomacy, particularly in Ghana, in their horn of sporting chemistry and participation in the world of sports. Qualitative data was collected from the key interviews with selected members of the Ghanaian sports industry (government, sports administration, athletes, diplomats, and other relevant professionals). This chapter takes sports diplomacy in Ghana as the focus of analysis for analysing the complex structure of sports diplomacy in Ghana — how it is thought of, practiced, and placed in the escalating context of national development and international relations. Sports diplomacy serves as a strategic tool for Gains in the perception of Ghana's soft power to the international community, promotion of cross-cultural relations, and recognition. Nevertheless, even though Ghana has boasted of great sportsmen like Azumah Nelson, Abedi Pele and superstars like Mohammed Kudus, it has only now started using sports deliberately and strategically as a diplomatic tool, the question is now how it looks today and what are the likely consequences.

This chapter also takes a thematic approach to the analysis as guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) following the six-phase process of familiarisation with the data, coding, generation of themes, review, and definition. The ability to systematically distill the qualitative insights to coherent and meaningful patterns, as well as a robust interpretation of the perspective of respondents through this methodology allowed the researcher to avoid complete emersion in the richness of data. The data are summarized into four main broken-out themes that were culled from the data: perceptions of sports diplomacy in Ghana, Ghana's international sports engagement, challenges and opportunities in sports diplomacy; and future directions for sports diplomacy in Ghana. These

themes constitute core issues and opportunities put forward by participants, providing a structure through which to evaluate the coalescence between sports and diplomacy of the Ghanaian context.

Twelve profiles are provided in Section 4.2 of the demographic and professional profiles of twelve participants whose profiles cover a wide breadth of roles and perspectives on Ghana's sports ecosystem from which the study draws its experiences and expertise. This group of sports athletes and coaches, sports journalists and researchers from all over the world provides therefore both a base of practical experience and academic insights to enrich the study. However, responses inform not only the current state of play (or patrimony) of sports diplomacy but structural, policy, and cultural determinants of sports diplomacy. Participation in institutionalized international sporting occasions such as FIFA WC, the Olympic Games, and the African Cup of Nations (AFCON) shows that Ghana has a role to play in the international and regional playing field, but the normal lack of intentional strategic frameworks ordinarily limits the diplomatic dividends recorded from such participation.

Finally, this chapter places the findings in a wider theoretical and empirical context regarding the relevant work on the theoretical and empirical reasons connected with the harnessing of sports for diplomatic purposes as per Murray (2012) and as noted by Orlov (2019). For Ghana, it also considers the country's legal and policy frameworks such as the National Sports Act of 2016 and the National Youth and Sports Policy, to determine whether the integration of sport into Ghana's foreign policy agenda is supported or not. This discussion combines primary data from respondents with secondary data in order to provide a holistic evaluation of how sports diplomacy can be shaped to present opportunities for Ghana, and the challenges to be surmounted in order to fully exploit their possibilities.

This study serves as a bridge between the theory of sports diplomacy and its practical application in Ghana. It incorporates social realities into the analysis of sports, examining how sports go beyond entertainment to foster international relations, strengthen national identity, and contribute to broader social objectives such as peacebuilding and regional integration. The findings not only enhance academic discussions on the role of sports in diplomacy within developing nations but also offer practical recommendations for policymakers, sports administrators, and other stakeholders to leverage sports as a tool for improving Ghana's global standing. While Ghana has the necessary resources—such as talent, culture, and history—to succeed in sports diplomacy, a deliberate and coordinated approach is essential to translate this potential into meaningful outcomes.

4.1.1. Data Analysis

The data acquired from the key informant interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis as per the proposed process by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process included the researcher familiarizing themselves with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing the themes and naming and defining the identified themes. The data sourced from the interviews were then coded to provide the researcher with an overview of the entire data set.

The results of the study are based on responses from key stakeholders in sports diplomacy in Ghana, including government officials, sports administrators, athletes, and diplomats. The findings are categorized into four key themes: Perceptions of Sports Diplomacy in Ghana, Ghana's International Sports Engagement, Challenges and Opportunities in Sports Diplomacy, and Future Directions for Sports Diplomacy in Ghana.

4.2. General Characteristics

The respondents of the study were made up of twelve participants who have been engaged in different roles all in relation to sports, with some exposure to events and activities that border on Sports Diplomacy in Ghana. Out of the twelve participants, 58.3% were male (7) representing the majority while 41.7% of respondents were female. The average age of the participants who responded to the study was approximately 33.4 years with the youngest respondent being 22 years and the oldest being 42 years of age.

With regard to the professional backgrounds of participants, they were primarily athletes representing 25 %, sports administrators and coaches both representing 16.7% each, and other roles such as researchers, NGO representatives, and sports journalists. Notably, about 41.7% of respondents have roles that directly relate to sports diplomacy such as political science and international relations studies. This reflects a blend of the depth and expertise that the pool of respondents brings to the study, aligning with the study's focus.

A significant portion of respondents (50%) hold at least a bachelor's degree, while 33.3% reported that they have completed a master's degree and one participant representing 8.3% holds a PhD. The majority (66.7%) of the sample had at least six years of experience in their respective roles, indicating a relatively high level of professional experience within the group.

Notable among these were sports science, international relations, and political science which were the most common fields of study and made up 58.3% of participants' academic backgrounds. This, the researcher believes suggests a diverse yet focused knowledge base relevant to the topic under consideration, which when combined with the practical experience that respondents have opens the researcher up to a rich wealth of knowledge for this study and the opportunity to obtain information relevant to sports diplomacy in Ghana.

Table 1 below further shows the demographic characteristics of respondents of the study:

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Professional Role	Highest Education Level	Field of Study
SD 1	36	Male	Sports Administrator	Masters	Sports Management
SD 2	42	Female	Sports Organizer	Master's	International Relations
SD 3	37	Male	Researcher	PhD	Political Science
SD 4	25	Female	Athlete	Bachelor's	Sports Science
SD 5	37	Male	Sports Journalist	Bachelor's	Journalism
SD 6	35	Female	Sports Administrator	Master's	Public Administration
SD 7	22	Male	Athlete	Bachelor's	International Diplomacy
SD 8	30	Female	Sports Journalist	Bachelor's	International Relations
SD 9	27	Male	Athlete	Bachelor's	Political Science
SD 10	38	Female	Coach	Bachelor's	Sports Science
SD 11	28	Male	Coach	Masters	Physical Education
SD 12	36	Male	NGO Representative	Bachelor's	Social Work

Table 1. Demographic Data of respondents

4.3. Perceptions of Sports Diplomacy in Ghana

The first question the study sought to examine was the current state of sports diplomacy in Ghana, and this was examined through the lenses and perceptions of respondents who have a wealth of years of experience with sports in a manner that transcends both local and international borders. The general perception that sports diplomacy has been an underutilized tool for Ghana was a critical finding. Respondents were able to understand the concept of sports diplomacy and further associate different experiences and opportunities within their endeavours where they have come into contact with sports diplomacy. While there was a general recognition by respondents of the potential that sports diplomacy holds, they remarked that it is not yet being intentionally and strategically harnessed for the benefit of the nation.

One respondent pointed out,

Through the local sports that we have engaged in and sometimes traveling out to sister countries even at the student's level, we are able to create bonds and get to unite with our colleagues through sports. Regardless of that, it doesn't seem our leaders recognize the potential for sports as a tool for intentionally doing diplomacy. (SD 9)

Another respondent also highlighted the unintentional approach that sports diplomacy rears its head in sporting activities and the need for sports leadership to take a more hands-on and intentional approach.

One of the reasons we host yearly bilateral games is to allow for the relationship between our two institutions to continue to go on. I see it as very important to do whatever we can to host these games even when there are university strikes and other issues. If only the importance could be realized at the higher levels, we could use the opportunity to intentionally make use of sports diplomacy. Then all universities across the country would also be engaging in such games with counterparts in different countries. (SD 2)

This observation speaks to Orlov's (2019) study which found that a better nexus between sports and the foreign policies of states will yield significant results. The study remarked that states should be more intentional about integrating sports into their policy frameworks.

Another respondent, a journalist who has been working extensively in the area of sports also shared.

When you look at the power of sports, I believe that we haven't done too much yet especially when you look at some of the icons that we have such as Abedi Pele. He was a key figure who enabled South Africa to be able to secure the hosting bid for the African Cup of nations. That should tell you how much influence our sports icons can have, if only we can leverage them properly. (SD 5)

In the commentary of Murray (2012) which extensively explores the relationship between sports diplomacy and statecraft, he emphasizes the importance of states being intentional in their use of sports diplomacy, especially its integration into a state's foreign policy. He argues that sports diplomacy should not be an afterthought or a spontaneous endeavor, but rather a deliberate, strategic component of a country's diplomatic efforts. The commentary further asserts as with Orlov's, that when employed effectively, it holds the potential to enhance international relationships, improve the soft power a nation wields, and act as a tool for peacebuilding, cultural exchange, and fostering goodwill (Murray, 2012).

In Ghana, although the benefits of sports diplomacy are realized in certain instances as a by-product of sporting activities, there is a gaping disconnect between the potential of sports as a diplomatic tool and its actual application. This further suggests a need to enhance the

understanding of sports diplomacy and to elevate the awareness of same across sports governing bodies across the country.

4.4. Legal and Policy Framework underpinning Ghana's Sports Diplomacy

Ghana's sports diplomacy is based on a strong legal and policy framework that defines its participation in international sports and uses sports as a medium to make diplomatic advances.

This framework rests on the National Sports Act, 2016 (Act 934), a key legislation that creates the National Sports Authority (NSA) as a central body for the promotion and regulation of sports development in Ghana. It outlines what the government needs to do as far as encouraging the country to engage in sports at international and domestic levels, and doing so accordingly makes the legal foundation for Ghana's participation in global sporting events. As a result, the Act positions sports as a strategic tool of diplomacy, cultural exchange, and national branding by providing the NSA with the means to oversee administration, coordinate national teams, and develop dialogue with international sports organizations. Unfortunately, however, its vast ambitions tend to be curtailed by resource constraints along with the dearth of coordinated stakeholder focal points to streamline implementation and hence realize the maximum potential benefits.

The National Youth and Sports Policy (2015) highly complements the National Sports Act as it emphasizes the important role of sports in national development to the import exports of the country and international relations. This policy recommends these strategic investments in capacity building for talent cultivation, infrastructure development, and diplomatic engagements through sports, as athletics shall be used as a means to express the image and values of Ghana on the global stage. However, as Nketiah-Amponsah and Sarpong (2020) indicate, the implementation of these

policies has not been as effective as widely hoped. The inconsistent government funding and rigid bureaucracy often lead to impediments faced by Ghana in turning its sports diplomacy potential into reality and the gap between aspiration and execution cannot be ignored.

In addition to these cornerstone documents, several policy frameworks add diversity to Ghana's sports diplomacy. This is seen in the Sports for All policy, which aims to make sports available to all social strata, as well as make the same inclusive and participatory subject for the masses. On the one hand this initiative not only grows grassroots talent for international competition but it pursues Ghana's positive image as a vibrant and united country in the entire world through sports. Also, the gender equity articulated in the National Youth and Sports Policy (2015) seeks to address historical funding, training, and employment gaps for women and girls. By showing such gender focus, it promotes women's football development and participation in events such as the FIFA Women's World Cup or Olympics, it increases Ghana's soft power, displaying progressive values and further boosting its diplomatic efforts.

Beyond strategic bilateral and multilateral engagements, Ghana's sports diplomacy is further enabled through the NSA, and Ministry of Youth and Sports, which have the mandate of strengthening this culture. Ghana is able to host big events like the African Games or even succeed at the Commonwealth Games by securing partnerships with the other Member States and international bodies. Through bilateral agreements with Jamaica or the United States, for example, we have stimulated exchanges of athletes of trained athletes and have encouraged the flow of knowledge and the development of infrastructure. All these initiatives raise Ghana's international profile and cement diplomatic relations, but lack of funding, poor infrastructure maintenance, and administrative bottlenecks continue to impede these efforts.

The legal and policy parameters within which Ghana's sports diplomacy operates rest on the National Sports Act, 2016 (Act 934); the National Youth and Sports Policy, 2015; and, supporting addendums such as the Sports for All Policy, which constitute a systematized structure upon which Ghana can advocate sporting possession as a means of international goodwill and national pride.

The challenge, however, lies in the gap between policy goals and actual outcomes. To fully unlock the diplomatic potential of Ghana's sports ecosystem, it is essential to address these challenges through sustained investment, improved coordination, and the firm execution of policies. Only then can Ghana consistently harness the benefits of athletics to strengthen its soft power, promote cultural exchange, and solidify its position on the global stage. Beyond national policies, Ghana's alignment with international regulatory frameworks has played a crucial role in facilitating its sports diplomacy efforts. The Ghana Football Association (GFA) Statutes ensure that the country adheres to global football regulations, particularly those set by FIFA. This alignment allows Ghanaian teams to participate in major international tournaments, benefiting from FIFA-funded development projects and capacity-building initiatives.

Furthermore, Ghana has signed bilateral sports agreements with countries such as Brazil and Germany, allowing for the exchange of athletes, coaching expertise, and infrastructural support. While these agreements have yielded some positive outcomes—such as Ghanaian players transitioning to top European leagues—there remains a lack of a comprehensive long-term strategy to fully harness the benefits of these partnerships. Many agreements are often limited in scope, failing to extend beyond individual player transfers to broader diplomatic collaborations.

4.5. Ghana's International Sports Engagement

Ghana's participation in international sporting events has been a critical aspect of its sports diplomacy strategy, providing opportunities to showcase national talent, attract global investment, and foster diplomatic ties. The country has been a consistent competitor in FIFA tournaments, with the Black Stars' historic quarter-final run in the 2010 FIFA World Cup serving as a defining moment for Ghanaian football on the world stage. This achievement not only elevated Ghana's footballing reputation but also strengthened diplomatic relations with other African nations, as the team was widely celebrated as a continental representative. Additionally, participation in global tournaments has facilitated economic benefits, with European clubs increasingly scouting and signing Ghanaian players, thereby deepening sports-related economic exchanges between Ghana and European footballing nations (Darby, 2013).

Beyond football, Ghana has made significant contributions to the Olympic Games, particularly in boxing and athletics. The country has produced world-renowned athletes such as Azumah Nelson, a former boxing world champion, whose global success has reinforced Ghana's diplomatic visibility in the sports world. Ghana's participation in the Commonwealth Games has also provided a platform for diplomatic engagement, as the country regularly interacts with other member states within the Commonwealth framework. However, Ghana's representation at these global events is often constrained by financial limitations and inadequate preparation, reducing its ability to fully capitalize on the diplomatic opportunities that these competitions present. While other nations strategically use sports events to negotiate trade and diplomatic deals, Ghana's approach remains largely informal, highlighting the need for a more structured integration of sports into its foreign policy agenda.

At the continental level, Ghana's involvement in AFCON (African Cup of Nations) has been a key avenue for fostering regional cooperation and strengthening diplomatic ties with other African

nations. Ghana has won AFCON four times, and its consistent participation reinforces its status as a powerhouse in African football. Additionally, the country plays a significant role in the Confederation of African Football (CAF), contributing to decision-making processes that influence African football governance.

Ghana's international sports engagement has proven to be a valuable platform for enhancing the country's diplomatic relations. According to respondents, Ghana's participation in major global sporting events such as the Olympics and World Cup is an opportunity to showcase national pride, enhance bilateral relations, and promote its image internationally. As one respondent noted,

"When we compete on the international stage, it's more than just about winning; it's about forging relationships" (SD 3).

This finding supports the notion that sports diplomacy can foster soft power and build long-term diplomatic ties, particularly in Africa (Grix and Lee, 2013).

However, the absence of a coherent strategy to leverage these engagements for diplomatic benefits presents a challenge. The lack of institutional coordination and planning means that Ghana may be missing opportunities to turn its sporting successes into diplomatic gains. As one athlete observed,

"We don't have a clear plan to turn our international sports events into opportunities for diplomacy" (SD 4).

Despite the significant achievements chalked so far, Ghana's sports diplomacy at the continental level has been undermined by governance challenges within CAF, as well as internal disputes within the GFA that have occasionally led to FIFA sanctions. Addressing these governance issues and ensuring stronger institutional coordination could enhance Ghana's ability to leverage sports

as a diplomatic tool more effectively. This calls for more strategic policy formulation to integrate sports into Ghana's broader foreign policy agenda.

Ghana's cultural heritage has been another defining feature of its sports diplomacy, with traditional symbols, music, and attire reinforcing national identity on the international stage. One of the most notable expressions of this cultural influence was evident during the **2010 FIFA World Cup**, where Ghanaian fans became famous for their vibrant displays of traditional drumming, chants, and dances. The energetic presence of Ghanaian supporters clad in their national colors and adorned in kente cloth further highlighted the country's rich cultural traditions, earning widespread media attention and further solidifying Ghana's image as a culturally vibrant nation. This cultural diplomacy, often referred to as **soft power**, enhances Ghana's global appeal and fosters deeper connections with international audiences (Cornelissen, 2011).

Additionally, the incorporation of **traditional songs and war chants** into sports events has strengthened Ghana's national branding. The popular "jama" songs sung by Ghanaian football supporters have become synonymous with the country's sporting identity, influencing fan culture in other African nations. These cultural expressions not only boost team morale but also serve as a diplomatic tool, as they create a sense of unity among African nations that sometimes support Ghana in international tournaments.

4.6. Challenges and Opportunities in Sports Diplomacy

Respondents also identified a number of key challenges associated with Sports Diplomacy, particularly in Ghana. These were in response to questions aligned with the study's second research question which sought to explore the barriers and challenges. The challenges faced by most African and developing states, such as Ghana, in promoting sports diplomacy are significant and

multifaceted. Lack of prioritization limited financial resources, inadequate government financing, and a lack of coordination among different stakeholders have been consistently identified as barriers to properly harnessing sports diplomacy.

Lapses in Policy Implementation

Despite the existence of the policies discussed above, the implementation gap between policy directives and actual practice presents a significant challenge. Sports development in Ghana continues to suffer from inadequate funding, limited institutional coordination, and a lack of political commitment to integrating sports into the country's broader foreign policy framework. Many sports infrastructure projects initiated under the National Sports Development Strategy have stalled due to inconsistent government financing, weakening Ghana's ability to host international sporting events.

Moreover, while sports administrators acknowledge the potential of sports diplomacy, there is often a disconnect between the sports sector and Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, limiting the strategic use of sporting events for diplomatic gains. A more coordinated approach, aligning sports development with foreign policy objectives, could enhance Ghana's influence in global sports governance and strengthen international partnerships.

Lack of Prioritization

One of the major barriers to sports diplomacy in Ghana is the lack of prioritization by government authorities and relevant institutions. Sports diplomacy is often overshadowed by other foreign policy strategies, such as economic and security diplomacy, that are perceived as having more immediate returns. This neglect stems from limited understanding or acknowledgment of the role

sports can play in advancing diplomatic objectives, resulting in inadequate integration of sports into the national foreign policy framework (Nketiah-Amponsah & Sarpong, 2020).

Limited Financial Resources

The effective implementation of sports diplomacy initiatives requires significant financial investment, which is often lacking in Ghana. The limited allocation of resources to the sports sector hampers the country's ability to organize or participate in high-profile international sporting events. Additionally, inadequate funding affects the development of infrastructure and talent, which are critical to maintaining a strong international sports presence. The financial constraints also reduce the potential for cultural exchanges and collaborations that can enhance Ghana's global image (Nketiah-Amponsah & Sarpong, 2020).

Inadequate Government Financing

While the broader financial constraints impact sports in general, inadequate government financing specifically limits the capacity of sports diplomacy programs. Government budgets often fail to allocate sufficient funds to the sports ministries and affiliated organizations tasked with implementing diplomatic initiatives. This lack of financial commitment results in poorly organized programs, reduced participation in international events, and limited opportunities to engage with the global community through sports (Nketiah-Amponsah & Sarpong, 2020).

Lack of Coordination Among Stakeholders

The promotion of sports diplomacy requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, sports federations, athletes, and private entities. In Ghana, the lack of effective coordination among these groups hinders the implementation of cohesive strategies. For

instance, misaligned goals and priorities among ministries, sports organizations, and diplomatic missions result in fragmented efforts that fail to achieve meaningful outcomes. This lack of unity also diminishes the potential for leveraging partnerships and maximizing the benefits of sports diplomacy (Boakye, 2021).

As observed by one respondent,

There have been instances where some athletes have been made to fend for themselves due to either a lack of funding or a delay in funding. A popular example was the 2014 world cup allowance fiasco that in my view significantly impacted the spirit of the national team and impacted those of us back at home also. (SD 5)

Another respondent, an athlete drew from a comparison between the financial motivations they receive as opposed to the motivation that their counterparts from other institutions and nations also receive.

You sometimes hear on the news that this athlete was given this amount or that amount, even for bringing in a bronze medal. For some of us, we don't find it that way because there may be an allowance, but it could be small or even take a long while to come. (SD 4)

This observation reflects a broader systemic concern and underscores the need for a more coordinated and deliberate approach to sports diplomacy, with the government and relevant sporting authorities taking proactive steps to support athletes and facilitate their international engagements. Tannenbaum and Bekker (2019) echo this with the finding that most African states get outpaced by their wealthier counterparts who tend to invest more into sports as a whole and therefore get to harness the benefits associated with sports diplomacy.

In addition to financial constraints another key barrier that was highlighted was the inadequate government support for sports diplomacy, particularly through the integration into foreign policy. Respondents remarked that they have observed different instances whereby participating in cross-border sporting activities have been beneficial to them, through the creation of networks and building of relationships. However, these benefits were not realized out of an intentional approach by the government through the institution of sports diplomacy as part of its foreign policy endeavors. One athlete remarked -

Through sports, I have made many friends and even had opportunities to network with people that I may not have come into contact with if it was not for sports. It is one of the good decisions that I am happy about. When we go for some of these competitions, we make friends ourselves, it is not because there is a separate networking event that we can use. So most of the benefits, you either get it yourself because that is the only way... (SD 7).

Murray (2012) suggests that although many governments can understand the potential benefits of sports as a soft power tool, there is often a lack of strategic application and vision to be able to properly integrate it into their foreign policy frameworks. The lack of intentionality in using sports as a foreign policy tool means that even countries such as Ghana who boast strong and rich cultures may struggle to harness the benefits presented by sports. The situation is further exacerbated by the larger issues of political instability and discontinuity, governance challenges and competing priorities for many developing nations, leaving sports and international engagements through such avenues relegated to the background (Bukhala, 2018).

The study of sports diplomacy in underdeveloped and developing nations exposes the gap in technological and organizational infrastructure that limits the capacity for sustained international engagement through sports. The lack of a cohesive sports diplomacy strategy means that opportunities for cultural exchange, peacebuilding, and international networking through sporting

events are often missed (Murray, 2012). With the current state of sports in Ghana, particularly at the national level, teams are still able to rally local support for key events such as athletics, boxing and especially soccer. This tells of the huge potential that lies within these spaces if they are to be intentionally harnessed and deployed as tools of choice. It is also abundantly evident both from the perspectives of respondents and from other studies that without clear, structured, and proactive policy and institutional support, sports diplomacy runs the risk of being missed as an opportunity for Ghana to foster international relationships and further boost her national prestige.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the study also identified some potential through certain sports for Ghana to enhance her sports diplomacy efforts. The global prominence of sports like athletics, boxing, and football all of which Ghana has acquired some prestige in the past, presents Ghana with a unique opportunity to use these sports as vehicles for international engagement. As one athlete suggested,

Football and boxing are two sports where Ghana can really make an impact globally, we are already doing well in those areas. It might not necessarily be all the national teams, but the male under-20 team and female teams have been very good so far (SD 7).

Ghana's Azuma Nelson and Ike Quartey have solidified their names in the world boxing hall of fame, with several players such as Abedi Pele, Asamoah Gyan and much recently Mohammed Kudus doing same in the field of soccer, with recent exports such as Benjamin Azamati in the world of athletics. By capitalizing on these sports and the traction that some of the above-mentioned athletes have garnered, Ghana could strengthen its diplomatic relationships with other nations and increase its visibility on the world stage.

The Need for an intentional Strategic Approach

Ghana's engagement with sports diplomacy has been sporadic and lacks a coherent long-term strategy. The previous experiences of other country's initiatives show that the further development of sports diplomacy can bring tangible results if there is a clear plan of action. However, for Ghana to maximize this potential it requires a strategic plan on how sports diplomacy can be used to support the country's broader foreign policy agenda.

This instability of investment is another major challenge that Ghanaian sports diplomacy has to deal with, especially in terms of sports facilities and development initiatives. It is important to note that while efforts such as the Real Republicans and the Nkrumah Gold Cup were successful in their time, such processes have not been followed up in the following years. To this effect, Ghana has to go for modern sports facilities, talent search at the basic level, and cooperation with local sports associations.

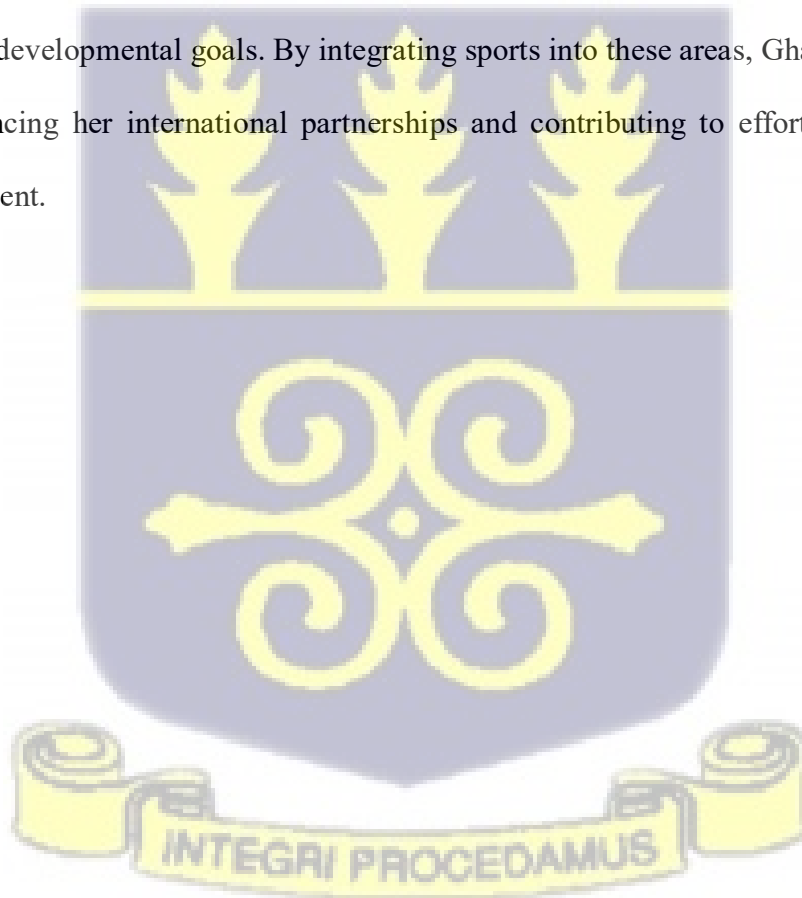
Moreover, Ghana should look to successful models of sports diplomacy from other countries. For instance, China's use of sports diplomacy, particularly through events like the Beijing Olympics, showcases how strategic investments in sports can enhance a nation's soft power and global influence (Xu, 2006). By studying and adapting these models, Ghana can develop its own robust sports diplomacy framework that supports its foreign policy and national development goals.

Future Prospects for Ghana's Sports

Regardless of the challenges and the seeming decline in the area of sports diplomacy for Ghana, it is not all doom and gloom. There still exists a myriad of opportunities for Ghana to build on the foundations of its past reputation of sports diplomacy. One of such potential areas is the leveraging of sports to promote regional integration in West Africa. This can be achieved by organizing and

participating in more regional sports competitions to strengthen the ties between Ghana and her neighboring countries, further promoting a sense of regional solidarity. This approach, similarly aligned with the goals of the Economic Community of West African States can contribute greatly to creating solidarity among members of the regional block.

In addition to this, Ghana can adopt sports as a tool to engage the international community on other pertinent issues such as education, healthcare, and peacebuilding. For example, organizing sports programs that promote healthy lifestyles can factor into broader public health campaigns. While an increase in number and quality of sports initiatives aimed at the youth such as the Right To Dream Academy which birthed the likes of Asamoah Gyan and Mohammed Kudus can support educational and developmental goals. By integrating sports into these areas, Ghana stands a better chance of enhancing her international partnerships and contributing to efforts geared towards global development.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary of Findings

Ghana has a rich history in sports diplomacy, marked by notable participation in international events such as the Olympics and the African Cup of Nations. The country has also hosted regional competitions like the All-Africa Games and promoted cultural exchanges through sports collaborations. These efforts reflect Ghana's commitment to leveraging sports as a tool for diplomatic engagement. However, the study revealed significant gaps in the strategic approach to sports diplomacy. While individual initiatives exist, there is no unified strategy, leading to fragmented implementation. The absence of sports diplomacy integration into Ghana's foreign policy framework further limits its effectiveness and sustainability.

Effectiveness of Sports Diplomacy in Fostering Global Relations

Sports diplomacy has been effective in building bilateral relationships through joint sporting events and collaborations. These initiatives have enhanced cultural appreciation and understanding, particularly within Africa, fostering a sense of unity and shared identity. Ghana's sporting achievements have also elevated its international profile, creating opportunities for diplomatic engagement.

Despite these successes, the impact of sports diplomacy is often short-lived. Major events generate temporary visibility, but a lack of sustainable frameworks and follow-up strategies means the long-term benefits are not fully realized. The study highlights the need for structured mechanisms to maximize the diplomatic potential of sporting engagements.

Barriers to Effective Sports Diplomacy

The research identified several barriers that hinder the effective implementation of sports diplomacy in Ghana.

One key challenge is funding deficits, as limited budget allocations restrict the scope and impact of initiatives. Additionally, policy gaps, including the absence of a comprehensive national sports diplomacy policy, result in uncoordinated efforts. Weak collaboration between key institutions, such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, exacerbates the situation, alongside human resource constraints due to insufficient training for sports administrators. These barriers collectively undermine the potential of sports diplomacy as a strategic tool for fostering international relations, necessitating targeted interventions to address these shortcomings.

Opportunities for Enhancing Sports Diplomacy

Ghana has significant opportunities to enhance its sports diplomacy efforts. The country's strong sporting reputation, particularly in football and athletics, provides a solid foundation. The global demand for African talent further presents an avenue for positioning Ghana as a hub for sports diplomacy initiatives.

Moreover, there is potential to engage private sector partnerships to secure sustainable funding. Digital platforms also offer innovative ways to amplify sports diplomacy efforts, enabling broader outreach and engagement. Leveraging these opportunities can help Ghana optimize its sports diplomacy strategies and achieve greater global impact.

Strategies for Effective Integration of Sports Diplomacy

The study proposes several strategies to optimize sports diplomacy in Ghana. These include developing a national sports diplomacy policy to provide a cohesive framework and establishing partnerships with international sporting organizations to enhance collaboration. Promoting private sector involvement through incentives can ensure sustainable funding. Additionally, strengthening institutional capacities and integrating sports diplomacy into broader foreign policy objectives are critical. These strategies can enable Ghana to harness the full potential of sports as a diplomatic tool and achieve sustained benefits.

5.2. Conclusion

The study set out to explore the underutilization of sports diplomacy within Ghana's foreign policy strategy despite the country's rich sporting heritage and global sports icons. The findings clearly show that Ghana, while endowed with immense potential in sports, has not strategically harnessed sports as a tool for international relations. The research reveals that although Ghana's sports successes have brought the country international acclaim, the application of these achievements to advance diplomatic goals has been sporadic, inconsistent, and largely uncoordinated. Ghana's participation in global sports events such as the Olympics, World Cup, and other international competitions presents an untapped opportunity to boost its diplomatic ties and enhance its soft power. However, the lack of a coherent, institutionalized sports diplomacy framework means that these opportunities are often missed or underutilized. The absence of a structured approach is a result of several factors, including inadequate government support, limited financial resources, and a lack of intentionality in integrating sports into Ghana's foreign policy agenda.

Despite these challenges, the study also highlights some key strengths and opportunities for Ghana. The country's global sporting icons, such as Abedi Pele, Michael Essien, Azuma Nelson, and Mohammed Kudus, can play pivotal roles in elevating Ghana's sports diplomacy efforts if properly integrated into a broader diplomatic strategy. Sports like football, boxing, and athletics, where Ghana has made significant strides, offer considerable potential to enhance the country's international engagement, foster cultural exchange, and build long-term diplomatic relationships.

5.3. Recommendations for Stakeholders in Improving upon Sports Diplomacy use in Ghana

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve Ghana's use of sports diplomacy in its foreign policy:

5.3.1. Institutionalize Sports Diplomacy

Ghana should create a dedicated sports diplomacy framework within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aligning sports initiatives with the country's broader foreign policy objectives. This would involve formally integrating sports diplomacy into the diplomatic agenda, ensuring that sports events are leveraged for diplomatic purposes and fostering relationships with other nations through sports.

5.3.2. Develop Strategic Partnerships

Ghana should actively form partnerships with international sporting organizations, foreign governments, and multinational corporations to support sports diplomacy initiatives. This could include hosting international sporting events, athlete exchanges, and collaborative training programs that strengthen ties with other countries.

5.3.3. Leverage Sports Icons as Diplomats

Ghana should more effectively utilize its sports icons as ambassadors of the country's foreign policy. Through well-coordinated programs, these athletes can represent Ghana at international events, promoting the nation's image, values, and culture. A more structured role for prominent figures in Ghana's sports community in diplomatic missions would raise the country's profile globally.

5.3.4. Increase Government Support and Funding

The government should allocate more resources toward sports diplomacy, including financial support for athletes' participation in international events and for organizing diplomatic sports events. This would ensure that sports diplomacy is not hindered by financial constraints and that Ghana can fully capitalize on the potential of sports to enhance its international relations.

5.3.5. Training and Capacity Building

There is a need for specialized training and capacity building for individuals working in the area of sports diplomacy. Government officials, sports administrators, and athletes should be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the intersection of sports and diplomacy. This could include workshops, seminars, and collaboration with international experts in sports diplomacy.

5.3.6. Ensure Consistency in Efforts

It is essential for Ghana to implement a consistent and ongoing strategy for sports diplomacy.

Efforts should not be sporadic or based solely on individual initiatives but should be a part of an

integrated, long-term approach. This includes establishing regular international sporting engagements, media campaigns, and educational programs on the benefits of sports diplomacy.



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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide: Exploring Sports Diplomacy in Ghana

Section A: Participant Information

- Can you please introduce yourself and describe your current role?
- How long have you been involved with the sports industry?

Section B: Perceptions on Sports Diplomacy

- In your own words, how would you define sports diplomacy? What are the primary objectives of sports diplomacy initiatives in your context?
- How would you describe the role of sports in enhancing international relations for Ghana?

Section C: Implementation and Impact

- How do you measure the success and impact of sports diplomacy initiatives?
- Can you describe any specific instances where sports diplomacy has effectively facilitated diplomatic relations or cultural exchange?
- What role do athletes play in sports diplomacy, and how are they prepared for this role?

Section D: Challenges and Opportunities

- What are the main challenges you perceive are facing the implementing of sports diplomacy initiatives?
- How do you address or overcome these challenges?
- What opportunities do you see for the future of sports diplomacy in enhancing international relations?

Section E: Policy and Institutional Support

- What policies or institutional frameworks support/could support sports diplomacy efforts?
- How do governmental and non-governmental organizations contribute to sports diplomacy in your region?
- Are there any specific policies or frameworks you believe should be introduced or improved to better support sports diplomacy?

Section F: Personal Insights and Reflections

- Can you share a memorable experience or story that highlights the impact of sports diplomacy?
- What recommendations would you give to enhance sports diplomacy in Ghana?

Section G: Conclusion

- Is there anything else you would like to add or any topic you feel we haven't covered that is important to understand sports diplomacy?

